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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE GROUP
INTELLIGENCE REPORT

COUNTRY Egypt/Other Middle East Countries

DATE: 25X1X6

INFO. [REDACTED]

SUBJECT Grand Mufti's Views on Arab League

DIST. 18 February 1947

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PAGES 2

SUPPLEMENT

ORIGIN [REDACTED]

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1. To visiting Arab leaders the Grand Mufti continues to deplore the sad state of Arab affairs. He tells his listeners to abandon all hope in the Arab League for the defense of the Arab cause in Palestine and elsewhere, pointing out that the League had failed to take action on Palestine, although this question had been on its agenda in October, November and December 1946. Another League failure, according to the Mufti, has been the League's inaction in the Alexandretta (Hatay) controversy, which had been quietly stricken from its agenda by the Secretary-General, in response to a British recommendation.

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Comment: This reference to the Hatay is apparently calculated to appeal to Syria, which appears to be lending support to the Grand Mufti. Prior to returning to his native Syria, Jamil Mardam, former Minister to Egypt and now Prime Minister, consulted the Grand Mufti on these matters and pledged cooperation. It is also reported that upon his arrival in Cairo on 1 January 1947, Riyad Sulh, Premier of Lebanon, called upon the Mufti at his home in Zaytun on 4 January and renewed the pledge given to the Mufti by Jamil Mardam.

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2. The Grand Mufti also maintains that the "Greater Syria" project and the proposal for a union of Iraq and Trans-Jordan threaten the existence of the Arab League. In addition, he points to constant intrigues by Communist agents, the uncompromising attitude of Turkey, and complications presented by the unstable political structure in Lebanon, owing to its large Christian element.

Because of these undercurrents, the Grand Mufti predicts that the League is doomed to disintegration, in spite of all the best British efforts,-- a contingency which he relishes with unconcealed jubilation. For this reason he wishes to prepare Arab youth to assume the responsibilities of the League in leading the destinies of the Arab world when the occasion arises. This has brought about his efforts to establish a new League of Arab Nations (See Report No. [REDACTED])

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4. Tracing the origin of the League, the Grand Mufti relates that the project had long remained an Arab dream, which was not fulfilled until the British acceded to its organization in accordance with their conception, although it had been under consideration by the British since 1922. At that time, they induced the late King Faysal of Iraq to sponsor the project. Faysal dispatched Nuri al-Sa'id from Iraq to Egypt to negotiate with representatives of the late King Fu'ad. Although some progress was made in this direction, the obscure political outlook of the Egyptian Revolution (Sa'd Zaghlul's period) caused the plan to fail. British policy, however, imposed the Arab League project in 1942 on Mustafa al-Nahhas, then Egyptian Prime Minister, who aspired to the leadership of the Arab world. His dismissal from the government and the withdrawal of British support ended his illusions. With the advent of Abd-al-Rahman 'Azzam as Secretary-General of the League, the Arabs were treated to a rude awakening. It then became apparent to their leaders that the League was intended for the ultimate designs of British diplomacy.

The Grand Mufti also asserts that the Soviet Union and France disapprove of the conduct of the Arab League because these two nations are convinced that it is a political instrument controlled by the British. As to the U.S., its stand is characterized by evasion. Although America dislikes British ascendancy in the Arab world, it cultivates friendly relations and backs the British for temporary expediency. According to the Grand Mufti, the U.S. hopes some day to secure control of the League in order to support American economic and political interests in the Middle East, particularly the existing and proposed pipe lines in Palestine and Saudi Arabia.

The Mufti is said to have stated that Nuri Sa'id of Iraq would call on him in Cairo during the latter half of January 1947 in an effort to effect a rapprochement between the Mufti and the Hashimites. It was pointed out that the British are entertaining the idea of extending King Abdallah's influence over the Hejaz at the expense of Ibn Saud, who would be forced to retire to the Nejd, providing such a plan is realized. It was intimated that the British are seeking the Mufti's approval of such a plan and, in turn, will grant him freedom of activity.

The Mufti is reported as stating that Britain will back Abd-al-Rahman 'Azzam, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States, as head of Tripoli. It is generally known that Britain is hoping to install the Senussi as Emir of Cyrenaica.

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Comment: [REDACTED] distributed on 18 July 1946, reported that the British were fostering a plan to place Abd-al-Rahman 'Azzam at the head of Libya, after detaching him from the Arab League.

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